

The Relationship Between Household Socioeconomic Status and Mental Health in Women During Pregnancy: A Path Analysis

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Abstract

Background: High and low levels of anger, tension, rage, pathological anxiety and depression are the most common psychological disorders which occur during pregnancy, and can lead to undesirable outcomes.

Objectives: The present study was conducted in order to investigate the relationship between household socioeconomic status and mental health in women during pregnancy in 2014 - 2015.

Methods: The present cross-sectional study was conducted on 400 pregnant women from 24th to 32nd weeks of gestation in Tehran with random sampling. Data was collected using a demographic and obstetrics questionnaire, a household socioeconomic status (HSES) scale, the Perceived Social Support Scale and the short-form version of the Depression, Anxiety, and stress scales (DASS-21) and, then was analyzed using SPSS-22 and Lisrel-8.8 by statistical path analysis.

Results: According to the path diagram, among the direct paths, social support had the greatest negative effect ($B = -0.29$), however household size had the greatest positive effect ($B = 0.18$) on maternal mental health as per the DASS; among the indirect paths, paternal education and income had the greatest negative effects ($B = -0.053$; $B = -0.035$) and maternal education the greatest positive effect ($B = 0.002$) on maternal mental health.

Conclusions: The financial deprivations and socioeconomic inequities such as poor nutrition, poverty, poor housing and poor income is contributed significantly to the incidence of chronic diseases and mental health by way of psychosocial factors, lifestyle behaviors and physiopathological changes. Counseling interventions aimed at improving maternal mental health through alleviating socioeconomic damages and increasing family support are recommended.

Keywords: Mental Health, Path Analysis, Pregnancy, Socioeconomic Status

1. Background

Pregnancy is one of the most sensitive and complex periods in a woman's life. Although childbearing is considered an important and pleasant event for a couple and a family, however, it can be a critical time for women (1). Pregnancy leads to the physiological changes in body's reproductive and endocrine systems and causes changes in appearance that are beyond the woman's control. Therefore make her physically and mentally vulnerable (2,3). Any factor that causes physical and mental tension and also the loss of balance is considered as a stressor (4). Stressful situations has been created a range of emotional reactions, from happiness (when an event is difficult, but manageable) to anxiety, anger, discouragement and depression (5). High and low levels of anger, tension, rage, pathological

anxiety and depression are the most common psychological disorders which occurred in almost 50% of pregnancies (6). Psychological disorders during pregnancy can lead to undesirable outcomes such as miscarriage, preterm childbirth, still birth, intrauterine growth retardation, a low Apgar score, gestational hypertension and preeclampsia, impaired infant development and postpartum depression as well as can affect on the child's health for the long term (7-13). Moreover, any psychological disorder during pregnancy leads to other psychological disorders and the combination of these disorders can worse the conditions for mother and neonate (14). Therefore mental health during pregnancy is a highly important issue.

The process of pregnancy can cause emotional instability in women (15). Some of factors such as being young,